

COMMUNITY FORM

This section provides a broad overview of the existing community form in Lancaster County. Also included is a brief overview of the planning efforts underway or currently in force in the incorporated towns in Lancaster County. The section concludes by also reviewing the current plans and zoning used in the counties surrounding Lancaster County.

OVERALL COMMUNITY FORM

Currently, there is a very well defined community form in Lancaster County. The main land use in Lancaster County is agricultural use. Of the approximately 840 square miles in the County, the Lincoln city limits covered only 77 square miles or barely 9 percent of the land, despite having 90 percent of the County population. Well over three quarters of the land is in agricultural use with row crops or pasture. Wide open vistas across farm fields predominate, though some tree masses are generally found along creeks or property lines. Lakes, ponds and wildlife management areas are another significant feature scattered across the county.

Several unique environmental features are found in the County. Rare saline wetlands are mainly found in the northern part of the County and include the rare Saltwort and Salt Creek Tiger Beetle. Areas of native prairie are also found in some parts of the county. Native Prairie grasses were once the main feature in the County, prior to settlement.

The County is well defined by the Township system of land sales in the 1800's. The federal system established to divide most of the Great Plains and Midwestern United States into one mile square sections, with thirty six sections in a township has left a lasting impression on the land. Most of the county and urban roads are based on the even spacing one mile roads. Farm land is also well established along this pattern with many rectangular or square shaped farm lots.

The agricultural landscape is interrupted with 12 incorporated towns and ten unincorporated places, such as Cheney or Walton. Most towns are over one hundred years old and are generally spaced four to five miles apart, with more town development having historically occurred in the southern part of the County. Towns generally are along major roads or rail lines, with grain elevators often being the most prominent town feature when viewed from afar.

A more recent addition to the landscape is the development of residential acreages. Acreages are generally single family homes on lots of three to five acres. There are several large groupings of acreage subdivisions, clustered together over a three to four square mile area. There are also many acreages on lots of one to twenty acres scattered throughout Lancaster County.

The Lincoln urban area has expanded in a contiguous pattern with well defined edges between Lincoln and agricultural uses. The “leap frog” development which is a common and dominating force in other metropolitan areas is absent here. Generally when the urbanized area ends, the agricultural area begins - in short, most urban development takes place in Lincoln or the incorporated towns.

The State Capitol at over 400 feet in height is the key historic, architectural, and geographic landmark of the city and surrounding countryside. Within Lincoln and along many entryways into Lincoln, views to the Capitol have been preserved and enhanced.

Transportation facilities are also an important part of the landscape. Interstate 80, Highway 6 and other state and county roads have played an important part in organizing and shaping the County’s land use. Railroad lines also have helped form land development patterns. Some of these rail corridors have recently been converted into trails, which now form linear links between communities.

SUMMARY OF INCORPORATED TOWN PLANS

The following is a brief summary of the current comprehensive plans for incorporated towns in Lancaster County.

- The **Bennet** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995. The Plan calls for slow steady growth. The Plan does suggest the desire for encouraging some development toward the north along Highway 43 to Highway 2, with industrial and retail uses around that intersection. Bennet’s plan includes an area outside of their one mile planning and zoning jurisdiction that they recommend be developed as a subarea plan for incorporation in the Lincoln/ Lancaster County Plan.
- The **Davey** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1976. The plan called for substantial growth, reaching 400 persons by 2000. The population did not, however, increase during the 1990’s and was 153 in the 2000 Census. Plans are for physical growth largely to the south.
- The **Denton** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1996. The plan calls for a 2.2 percent annual growth rate. Physical growth is anticipated to occur primarily on the north and west sides of the town, encompassing an additional 1/8 to 1/4 mile in those directions.
- The **Firth** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1969. The plan called for a 1990 population of 469, a 37 percent increase in 20 years. Firth reached this goal with a 1990 population of 471 and continued to grow to 564 persons in 2000. The Plan calls for the physical expansion of the residential areas to the north and industrial expansion to the west. The Firth plan allows acreage development in their one mile area.
- The **Hallam** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1976. The population was projected to reach a target population of 400 in the year 2000. The 2000 census population was 276 persons, a decrease from the 1990 projection. Future town growth was expected to occur primarily to the east and west of the existing village.
- The **Hickman** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995. It projects a population growth rate of about 1 percent per year, adding an additional 147 persons by 2020. The towns urban growth is expected to occur primarily to the northwest and northeast along N. 68th street. The plan also calls for a “horizon plan” of one additional mile beyond the city’s existing one mile planning and zoning jurisdiction. The city’s policy calls for new residential development to be located in the city, restricting new residential development from the two miles out of town. A Lincoln Trail system should link Hickman with Lincoln, and the two state recreation lakes in the area. Hickman requests that their plan for the two mile area be reflected in the Lincoln/ Lancaster County Plan.

- The **Malcolm** Comprehensive Plan was adopted 1990. Population growth was determined to be dependent upon outside factors. Historic growth has been very slow. Future growth areas of the village are primarily to the north, with some potential to the east and west.

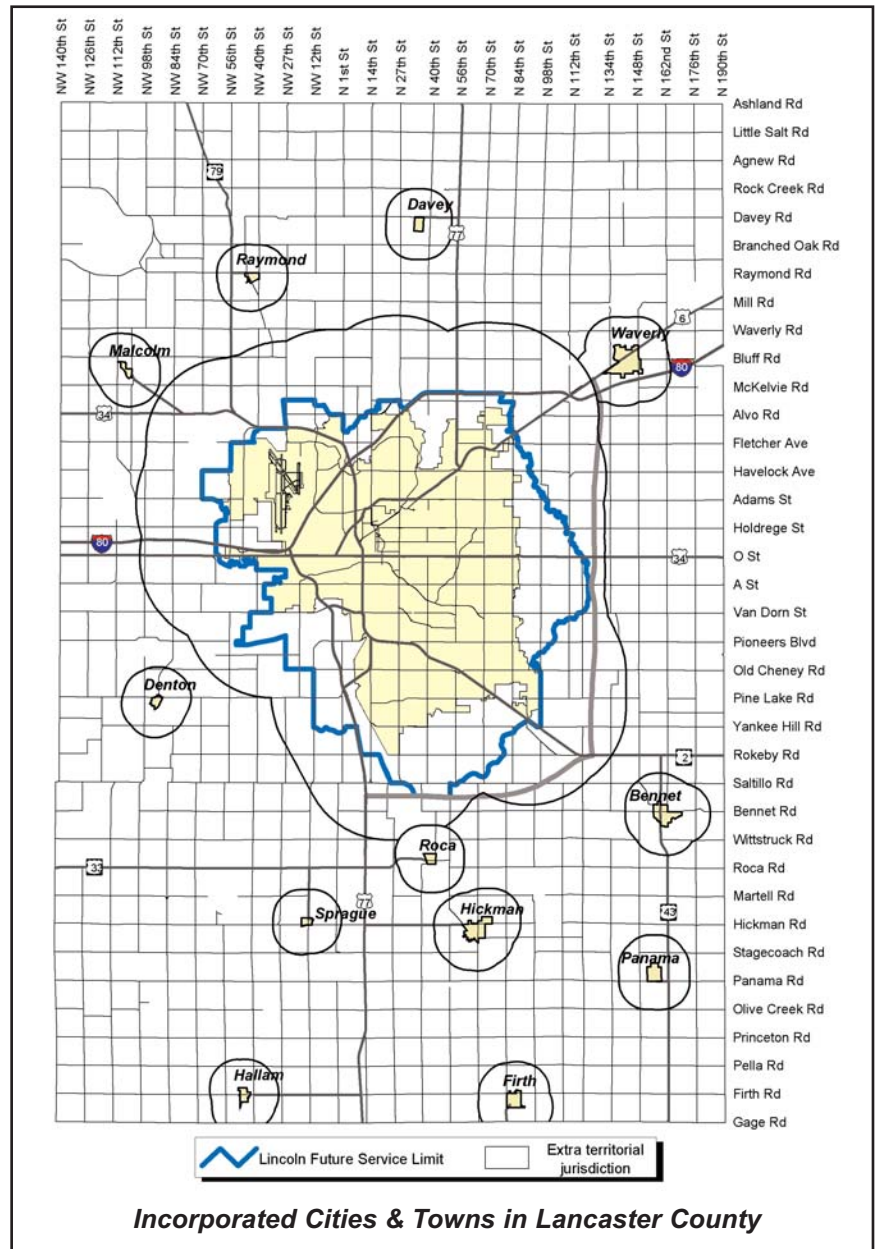
- The **Panama** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1976. Population growth was projected to reach a population of 250 by the year 2000, which it obtained. Future growth of the community was anticipated to occur to the north and east of town. A linear park system was projected to follow the drainage ways to the south.

- The **Raymond** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2000. Population growth is projected to be about 40 persons by the year 2020. The future growth of the village is directed to infill development within the current village limits. Future highway commercial is shown to extend west to Highway 79 and south to Mill Road.

- The **Roca** Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1976. The population was projected to reach 160 persons by the year 2000. The population actually reached 220 by 2000. The future land use shows growth to the north. The western edge of the town is the floodplain of Salt Creek which is suggested as a linear park and trail connection to Wilderness Park in Lincoln. Some acreage development is projected to occur in the vicinity of the quarries to the north.

- The **Sprague - Martell**

Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1977. The population was projected to reach 200 persons for Sprague and a total population for both Sprague and Martell to be 325 by the year 2000. Both communities fell short of this projected population. The future growth of the Village of Sprague was shown to the north and east with a longer term residential reserve to the west. An open space system was projected to connect the two towns along a greenway.



- The **Waverly** Comprehensive Development Plan was adopted in January 2002. Waverly's growth is projected to increase at a rate of 2.7 percent over the next 20 years, with a population gain of 72 percent. Waverly's population was 2,448 in 2000. Much of this growth was due to migration. The area to the north in the floodplain is to remain as agricultural use. The physical growth of the city is projected to the east and across the interstate to the south, to Alvo Road. This growth extends beyond the current one mile planning and zoning jurisdiction of the City and they have asked that their future growth area be reflected in the Lincoln/ Lancaster County Plan.

OTHER COUNTIES SURROUNDING LANCASTER COUNTY

The following is a brief summary of planned development (future land use) and zoning regulations for the eight counties adjacent to Lancaster County — Butler, Cass, Gage, Johnson, Otoe, Saline, Saunders, and Seward. Sarpy County is also included in this report because it is located along Interstate 80/Highway 6 corridor between Lincoln and Omaha. It does not include a full description of each County's land use plan or categories.

The communities of Crete, Cortland and Ceresco have their extraterritorial jurisdiction for planning and zoning extend into Lancaster County. Along with Crete and Ceresco, there are 15 more communities located in the surrounding area. Of these communities, 14 have adopted Comprehensive Plans, Zoning and Subdivision Regulations. Johnson County is in the process of developing their first Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Regulations. At this time, Butler County has neither a Comprehensive Plan nor Zoning Regulations.

CASS COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 1998)

Cass County is located northeast of Lancaster County. Nearby towns include Greenwood in northwest Cass County along Highway 6 and Eagle in southwest Cass County along Highway 34. Four land use categories in the Cass County Plan near Lancaster County include: Agriculture, Transitional Agriculture, Rural Residential, and General Commercial. The Transitional Agriculture category promotes agricultural activities but allows controlled residential development. This land use is designated around the villages of Greenwood and Eagle. The Transitional Agriculture area protects incorporated and unincorporated communities from intensive agricultural operations such as animal feed lot operations. Rural Residential is intended to accommodate large lot residential development and is designated south of Eagle, adjacent to Lancaster County and northeast of Greenwood. Future General Commercial land use areas are designated northeast of Greenwood in the vicinity of the Interchange 80 interchange, approximately 4 miles from the Lancaster County line and east of Eagle along Highway 34. Light Industrial is designated along a transportation corridor northeast of Greenwood, in the vicinity of the Interstate 80 interchange.

GAGE COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 2001)

Gage County is located south of Lancaster County. The villages of Cortland, Clatonia, and Adams are nearby. Four types of land use are designated near Lancaster County: General Agriculture, Transitional Agriculture, Agriculture Conservation, and Urban Reserve. Agriculture Conservation promotes conservation of areas with scenic status, excessive slopes, high water table, floodplains, or other factors imposed by the natural environment. The Urban Reserve area encourages general agricultural and agricultural industry, as well as large lot residential development (i.e. minimum lot size of 3 acres) around Clatonia and Adams.

JOHNSON COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IN DEVELOPMENT)

Johnson County is located southeast of Lancaster County. The Village of Sterling is approximately five miles east and four miles south from the Lancaster County/Johnson County line, along Highway 41. Johnson County is in the process of developing their first Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Regulations.

OTOE COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 1977, CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW)

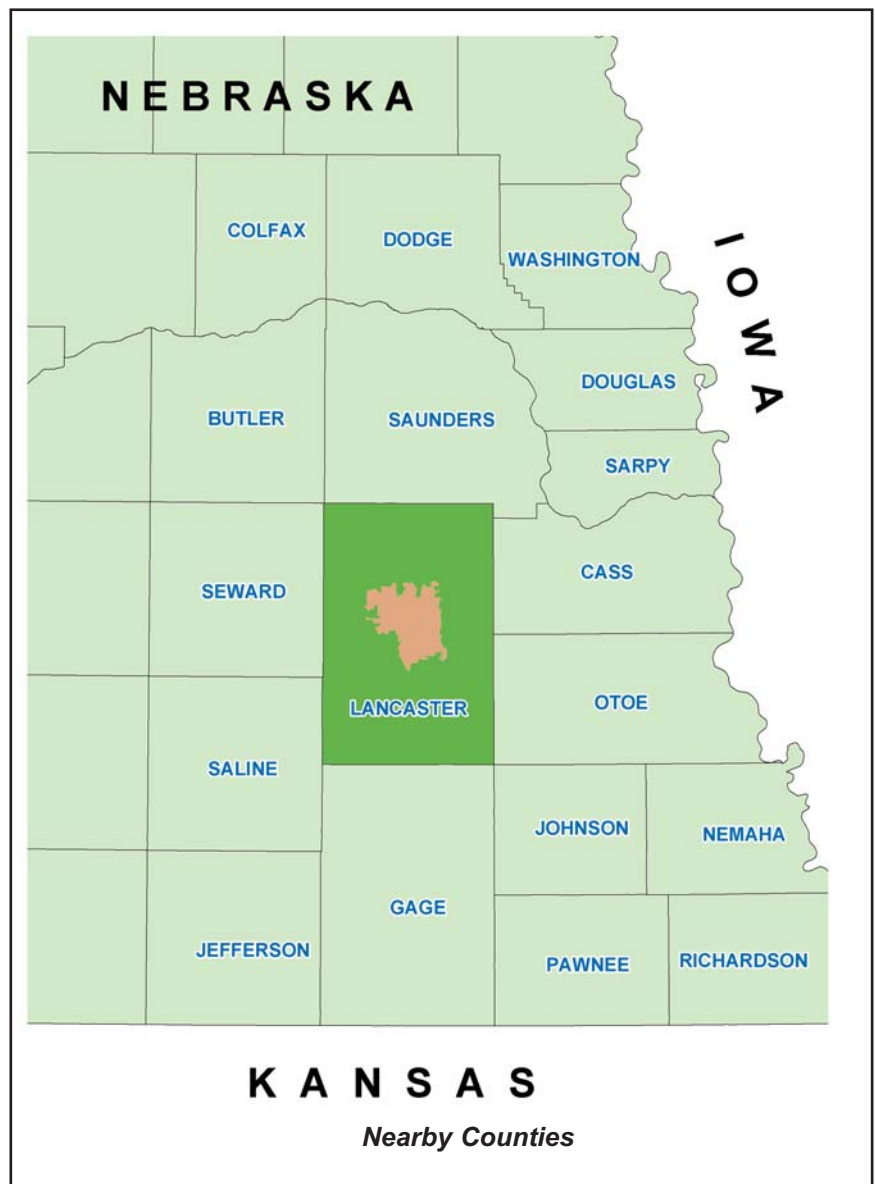
Otoe County is located east of Lancaster County with Douglas and Palmyra nearby along Nebraska Highway 2. Douglas has not adopted planning or zoning regulations. The Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations are currently being revised for Otoe County. They are considering a River Protection Area, around the Little Nemaha River and Little South Nemaha River to discourage development in the 100 year floodplain. They are also considering a Highway Corridor Overlay area to encourage agriculture, large commercial, or industrial uses along major transportation routes, such as a 1 mile band (½ mile either side) along Nebraska Highway 2.

SALINE COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 1976)

Saline County is located southwest of Lancaster County. The nearest community is Crete, along Highway 33. As a result of the 2000 Census, the City of Crete has become a First Class City and is now permitted to enforce a two-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction. Crete's current Comprehensive Plan does not reflect this new two-mile extraterritorial jurisdiction. Their future land use plan designates industrial uses along Highway 33, approximately 1 mile from the Lancaster County line. Future residential uses are designated eastward along 13th Street toward Lancaster County.

SARPY COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 2000)

Sarpy County is located northwest of Lancaster County. Sarpy County is connected to Lancaster County by two transportation corridors, Interstate 80 and Highway 6. Future land use designated along these transportation corridors include: Agriculture, Transitional Agriculture, Residential Low Density, and Commercial/Industrial. They also have a Conservation and Resources land use category to encourage the preservation of water quality and to minimize flood hazards for the area along the Platte River.



SAUNDERS COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 1993, CURRENTLY UNDER REVIEW)

Saunders County is located north of Lancaster County. There are four municipalities located nearby: Valparaiso along Highway 79; Memphis along Highway 63; Ceresco along Highway 77, and Ashland along Highway 6. The land use plan for Ceresco extends into Lancaster County with their one mile zoning jurisdiction. Their “preliminary” future land use plan map identifies the majority of land use in Ceresco’s jurisdiction in Lancaster County as floodplain. Future commercial and industrial uses are designated south and east of Ceresco’s corporate limits, along the Highway 77 corridor.

Saunders County is in the process of reviewing their Comprehensive Plan and zoning regulations. The current land use plan identifies three land uses nearby, including Agriculture, Rural Transition and Highway Corridor. Highway Corridor encourages economic development along a corridor approximately ¼ mile wide either side of Highway 77, Highway 79, Highway 66, and Highway 63 throughout the County.

SEWARD COUNTY (COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADOPTED IN 1995)

Seward County is located west of Lancaster County. Pleasant Dale and Garland are located in northeast Seward County are nearest. Five nearby land use areas include: Agriculture, Transitional Agriculture, Floodplain, Industrial/Commercial, and Highway Corridor. Their Transitional Agriculture category encourages compatible land uses between agriculture activity and existing communities. The Floodplain category discourages development in the 100 year floodplains such as Branched Oak Creek, Middle Creek, and Elk Creek.